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LEARNING ETHNIC DANCES AT A FESTIVAL IN QUEENS

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Ethnic music and dancing from eight regions of Central Europe, Armenia and the Balkan and Italian peninsulas can be sampled tomorrow in their most exuberant form at the seventh annual Ethnic Music Festival in Astoria, Queens, sponsored by the Ethnic Folk Arts Center.

From noon to midnight there will be dancing, music, eating and drinking in the Bohemian Hall and Park, a quarter-block-long, treeshaded garden and community hall built in the early 1900's to resemble a Middle European beer garden.

Unlike most music festivals that are separated into performers and the audience, this one joins musicians and spectators in the joy of communal singing and dancing. During the day, groups will play and talk about their music in the outdoor garden. Indoors, workshops at which visitors can learn ethnic dance will be offered until 6 in the evening.

After 6, the festival becomes a spirited dance, with many of the musicians who performed during the day providing the music and song. Picnic tables are arranged around the garden for those who prefer to watch and eat rather than to dance and eat. The food will reflect the festival's spirit - stuffed vine leaves, ground lamb on skewers, Bulgarian feta cheese, Italian bread, Greek pastry and whole lambs roasted on spits by Dimitri Gesker, a Bulgarian Greek who is a construction worker living in Astoria. The lamb will be served from 3 to 8 P.M.

Pocket of Ethnic Culture

Astoria is a renowned pocket of ethnic culture, with many immigrant families from different lands. "They move into a neighborhood where their families and friends have settled," said Martin Koenig, who founded the Ethnic Folk Arts Center, originally called the Balkan Arts Center, in 1966. "New York is still an immigrant center and all the best ethnic musicians are here."

"There's a continuous flow of immigrants from the old countries," added Ethel Raim, the center's co-director who, like Mr. Koenig, has spent a career searching for authentic music abroad and in the United States, attending community events everywhere in a quest for traditional music.

Thus visitors to the festival will hear music that is rarely recorded and rarely played outside community events such as weddings and christenings. Most of the musicians, who are specialists on their exotic-looking instruments, are not professionals. "They work six days a week," Miss Raim said, "and on the seventh, they make music."

The daytime part of the festival has the same itinerant quality as much of the music, which was carried from region to region along with population migrations and military conquests. Musicians 'Part of the Audience'

"The musicians will be part of the festival audience, roaming around and talking to everyone," Miss Raim said. "If you don't want to be in a dance workshop, there are plenty of tables to sit at and listen to music."

Indoors, David Henry will teach Greek dancing from noon to 1:30 P.M. Mr. Henry is not Greek. "He simply fell in love with the musical forms," Mr. Koenig said. "He immersed himself in the culture while keeping his American perspective. His ability to go back and forth makes ethnic dancing accessible to Americans."

More typically, however, the ethnic dance teachers and historians are of recent immigrant background, like Judith and Kalman Magyar, who will teach Hungarian dancing from 2 to 3:30 P.M. They came to the United States after the 1956 rebellion in Hungary. Together, they are involved in perpetuating Hungarian culture through folk ensembles and a folk museum.

Arsen Anooshian will lead the Armenian dance workshop from 4 to 5:30 P.M. A teacher in a Manhattan high school, he instructs community groups in Armenian dancing at night. Instructors Lead the Dancing

When the workshops end, the instructors will lead the evening's dancing. "You can learn enough during the day to know how to do the dancing," Mr. Koenig said. "And you can come cold - they're very accessible to beginners." Miss Raim suggests wearing comfortable shoes and clothing.

The dances that will be performed fall into two basic forms, couple dancing and line dancing. Hungarian dances are in the first category, Greek and Armenian in the second. Within categories are certain ethnic subtleties. "Armenian dancing is more weighty, closer to the ground," Miss Raim said. "Greek dancing is lighter on the feet."

In syrtos, a Greek line dance, the person at the head of the line improvises steps as the dance progresses. His frenzy and embellishments in turn stimulate the musicians and the other dancers. Line dances in most countries are led by men, flamboyant dancers who spin and jump. Women are expected to move in a more decorous manner and, in many nations, were traditionally separated from men. They either danced in separate lines or were prohibited from dancing in public at all.

While dancing is the evening's entertainment, music during the day will be more varied - ballads that record history, celebrations of daily life, songs for each occasion in the life cycle from birth to death. Contrast of Life and Music

The contrast between the daily lives of the musicians and the exotic nature of their music is vivid. One of the performers, Jim Finn, a computer scientist with a doctorate from Princeton University, learned the gaida, a Yugoslav bagpipe, when he was host for the visit of a teacher from Yugoslavia with whom he could not communicate, according to Mr. Koenig. "In two years, he learned the instrument by example," Mr. Koenig said.

The Orchestra Banatul is made up of five Rumanians and Serbs from Yugoslavia who now live in Ridgewood, Queens, and hold jobs as factory workers and janitors. Among their instruments are three accordions, including one button type rather than the more familiar keyboard instrument. "Most people think accordions are dull," Miss Raim said. "But in these hands they're subtle, nuanced, joyous."

Ilias Kementzides, who once worked in a cookie factory and who lives in Norwalk, Conn., emigrated from Salonika, an area populated by Greeks who were repatriated from Turkey in the 1920's. Mr. Kementzides plays the lyra, a small bowed instrument with a haunting sound.

An electrician and a doorman in Brooklyn are part of the Kitka Orchestra from Macedonia. The only visiting foreign group is the Teka Orchestra from Hungary, whose instruments include the cimbalom, the hammered dulcimer popularized in the theme from the film "The Third Man." Core Is the Family

The only Latin music will be played by the De Franco family, from the Calabria region of Italy. Another family makes up the Halkias Orchestra, from the region of Epirus on the Greek border of Albania. The group includes the father, his two

sons, his brother-in-law, a grandson and a close friend.

"Often, the core of these musical groups is the family," Miss Raim said. None can read music, although the two sons are among the few musicians who make a living performing.

"I learned with my ear and my heart," said Achileas Halkias, a violinist who came to the United States with a folk group that once played in Radio City Music Hall.

Because much of the music is passed from father to son, and because this music mirrors life, it is an endangered species. The festival has financial help in preserving it from the National Endowment of the Arts; the New York State Council on the Arts; Meet the Composer, a state fund; the Consolidated Edison Company, and the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company.

As the ethnic musicians become assimilated into other cultures, their music is also absorbed. "This music is part of a life cycle," Mr. Koenig said. "And, as their lives have changed, their music is being swept away." Celebration of a Simpler Life

One of the reasons for the Ethnic Music Festival, and the very *raison d'être* of the Ethnic Folk Arts Center in Manhattan, is to prevent its demise. For the festival is an affirmation and celebration of an earlier, simpler life.

"We're trying to keep the music alive," Mr. Koenig said. "If the musicians see that Americans appreciate their music, that gives it stature."

The Bohemian Hall is situated at 29-19 24th Avenue, Astoria. Admission is \$6.50; \$3 for children under 12 years of age and the elderly, and free for children under 6. The dance workshops are \$3.50 each. Food and beverages are extra. Should it rain, everything will move indoors.

To get there by public transportation, take the BMT's RR train to Astoria Boulevard-Hoyt Avenue station and walk one block north. By bus, take the No. 19 to 24th Avenue, or the No. 102 to 29th Avenue. By car, take the Queensboro Bridge or the Triborough Bridge. There is plenty of parking space.

For further information, call the Ethnic Folk Arts Center at 691-9510.

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